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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9159  
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RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 5978  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 3840  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2354  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7046  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1017  
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Palestinians,  
Syria/Russian, Lebanon, US/Israel, Iraq, Palestinian Territories  
(5/24)

11. Summary: Syrian papers reported the visit to Damascus by  
Palestinian Minister of Interior Said Siam and his meeting with  
VP Shara. Siam expressed the Palestinian government's and the  
Palestinian people's great appreciation for Syria's stances  
towards the Palestinian people. VP Shara reiterated the need to  
boost Palestinian national unity on a national principled basis  
and avert all that would create division and dispute among sons  
of one homeland.

On Syrian/Russian relations, papers reported the visit to Moscow  
by Abdullah al-Ahmar, Assistant Secretary General of the Baath  
Party, who said in a press conference held before leaving Moscow  
that viewpoints between the Party and Russian counterparts were  
identical on the latest developments in the region. Al-Ahmar  
emphasized Russia's importance in contributing to dealing with  
the regional issues, which will reflect positively on security  
and stability in the region.

As for Lebanon, papers reported a statement by President Lahoud  
stressing the importance of maintaining strong fraternal  
relations between Syria and Lebanon, saying that "straining ties  
between the countries is not in the interest of Lebanon, but that  
of its enemies." President Lahoud received delegations of student  
and youth organizations, who came to offer congratulations on the  
anniversary of the Liberation of south Lebanon; he pointed to  
Syria's assistance to the Lebanese Army saying "Syria offered all  
facilities to Lebanon until we were able to reunite the army,  
during a period of 3 years; the Lebanese people can't forget the  
Syrian assistance." He renewed rejection of merger of the  
Lebanese national resistance with the Lebanese army, saying that  
this would not be in the interest of the country.

Papers also reported a statement by SecGen of Hizbollah Hasan  
Nasrallah calling for a comprehensive national strategy in  
Lebanon to protect the country from Israeli aggression. "We have  
proposed a study to the Lebanese National Dialogue regarding a  
strategy to protect the country from Israeli aggression,"  
Nasrallah said in a speech at the opening of "resistance culture

exhibition" in Beirut, expressing readiness to discuss this strategy with all Lebanese. He reiterated that the Syrian Army fought along with the Lebanese against the Israeli occupation forces when they attacked Lebanon in 1982. He called on Lebanese parties to specify who is the enemy of Lebanon, saying, "if the conferees took for granted that Israel is the enemy of Lebanon, we would continue dialogue; but if some don't, then we are wasting time."

Papers also featured a statement by Nabih Berri, Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, criticizing UNSC resolution 1680 and describing it as defective. "This resolution adds nothing to UN Resolution 1559," Berri said in an interview published by the Lebanese newspaper As-Safir. The Lebanese Speaker wondered why UNSC Resolution 1680 never demanded that Israel withdraw from occupied Sheba'a Farms, saying "since the resolution is talking about Lebanon's sovereignty and independence why does it not even mention Israel and its continuous violations of Lebanon's airspace?" Berri warned against using Lebanon as a platform to judge and besiege Syria: "Actually I am afraid that some Lebanese factions are committed to an international agenda," he added. He underlined that in the Lebanese national dialogue most Lebanese understand that Syria represents a solution for several hard issues "Despite this, we find them going to far distant countries searching for a solution, instead of to Syria," he said.

End of summary.

## 12. Selected Headlines:

"VP Shara discusses with Palestinian Minister of Interior Siam recent developments in the Palestinian arena and means to avoid civil strife" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/24)

"Al-Ahmar concludes his visit to Minsk and Moscow, stressing the importance of Russia's role in the Middle East" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/24)

"Lahoud: Lebanon will never forget Syria's assistance. Berri reiterates warning against exploiting Lebanon against Syria. Nasrallah: Lebanon needs a strong government and a national and patriotic army. Criticism of UNSC 1680 continues: It reflects discrimination and double standards in international relations" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/24)

"Hanieh undertakes to prevent a Palestinian civil war. Al-Zaha'ar commences an Asian tour. The US Congress ratifies a draft resolution to halt aid to Palestinians. Bush: Olmert's plan on unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank might be an important step" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/24)

"Gilerman, Israeli Ambassador to the UN, describes John Bolton as a secret agent in the Israeli mission to the United Nations" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/24)

"Amnesty International reveals Israeli and US crimes in Palestine and Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/24)

"Eight nominees for the Iraqi Defense and Interior Ministers' positions. Washington and London discuss acceleration of withdrawal from Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/24)

## 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"The European Neighbor and Custody"

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Omar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (5/24): "The European position, as expressed in a statement by the EU presidency on 19 May, toward the detention of a number of Syrian intellectuals for signing the Beirut-Damascus Declaration on Syrian-Lebanese relations, is hypocritical.... How can the EU rise up in defense of human

rights in Syria while it remains deadly silent toward Israeli terrorism against an entire people, forgets thousands of Palestinians jailed in the occupation's prisons, unjustly and in violation of international law and the Geneva agreements on human rights, turns a blind eye to Israeli killing, destruction, and racism, and, worse still, joins Israel in punishing the Palestinian people for their democratic choice....

"Why hasn't the EU ever used its influence, as a major power, to serve justice in our region? Why did it not dare to send a fact-finding mission to investigate the Jenin massacre, for example...? Europe is ignoring human rights violations in Guantanamo, Abu Ghurayb, and the secret American prisons on European territory.... The main concern of Europeans, particularly the influential countries in the EU, is apparently to please the United States and Israel...."

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"The West Is One-Eyed"  
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Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (5/24): "We wonder How the United States gives itself the right to refer journalists to the judiciary if they reveal secrets on the Iraq war and yet denies the right of a sovereign country to question some of its citizens about their attempts to harm national unity and break the law. In this 'American era,' states have no right to exercise their sovereignty over their territory, protect their security and stability, and punish those who try to create sectarianism, encroach upon the law, and seek to harm national unity and stability."

"We wonder how the civilized West volunteers to defend human rights in Syria while it does nothing for more than 9,000

Palestinian prisoners in the jails of the occupation authorities.

"We regret that the West, which is responsible for planting Israel in the heart of the Arab homeland, has turned into a factor of pressure on and threat to countries of the world. It is biased in favor of the forces of aggression and terrorism, reminding us of its colonialist past, for which it apparently yearns."

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"Resolution 1680, a Blow to International Legitimacy"  
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Hamid Huran, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote (5/24): "Security Council Resolution 1680 dealt a new blow to international legitimacy when it interfered in relations between two sovereign states.... International law is jeopardized because the powers of hegemony use it to serve their interests, ambitions, and plans to control the nations of the world....

"Thus, the vital powers of the world should realize the magnitude of the threat to world stability and security and call for stopping this violation through diplomacy and within the framework of the United Nations to prevent the adoption of suspicious resolutions...."

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Variables of the Israeli Role"  
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Ali Qasim, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/24): "There are fearful signs that the American-Israeli summit in Washington will discuss not only Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's unilateral withdrawal plan, but also the regional roles that Israel will play to serve American

interests, at a time when the US Administration is facing a crisis in Iraq and a showdown over the Iranian nuclear file. This feeling was strengthened by leaks from the neoconservative team about the essential mission of Israel's presence in the region.... There are US reports of a strategic relationship with new dimensions between Tel Aviv and Washington.... We wonder if this is going to be a strategic partnership to extend the American era, in which Israel has become the driving force, the implementer, and even the decision-maker.... Through this the United States would only be adding fuel to the fire...."

JOHNSON-CASARES